

March 23, 1984

LB 928

held religious belief. Now, finally, I think it is extremely important that we narrow LB 928 to reflect this language in this legislative intent because otherwise we are opening the door far, far more broadly, I think, than most of us on this floor had ever contemplated and that most of us on this floor would wish. So I would ask your support of this amendment that would strike from the bill the phrase "or principles of conscience" as grounds for qualifying for the exception created by this legislation. Thank you.

PRESIDENT MCGINLEY PRESIDING

PRESIDENT: The Chair recognizes Senator Vard Johnson.

SENATOR V. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker and members of the body, I would like to have your attention. I think this is a very significant amendment that is being offered to LB 928. For the last six years all of us have wrestled with the Christian school issue and we have wrestled with the issue because it has always been placed to us in the context of sincerely held religious beliefs and I think that we have had a difficult time in ascertaining the correct way to proceed in the face of sincerely held religious beliefs. The Spire Report is based on the concept, on the notion of providing the least restrictive state alternative for people whose sincerely held religious beliefs require them to school and educate their children in facilities that simply are not under state sanction or control. What the amendment would do is it would confine the scene, it would set the stage for what you and I have always known the issue to be, sincerely held religious beliefs. The issue is not an issue called principles of conscience. Principles of conscience are substantially different from sincerely held religious beliefs. For example, an individual may decide not to send his or her child to a public school or to a parochial school knowing that the public school or the parochial school will somewhere along the line provide that child some type of education regarding the evolutionary status of human beings and that can be a principle of conscience to the individual. It is different from a sincerely held religious belief, and that individual can make the decision to educate that child in that individual's own home. The individual then has to